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The mission of
Easter Seals Capper Foundation
is to enhance the independence
of people with disabilities,
primarily children.

February 18, 2011

To: Lieutenant Governor Colyer & Distinguished Members of the
Kansas Medicaid Reform Task Force

From: Jim Leiker, President & CEO, Easter Seals Capper Foundation

Background Information: I am the President & CEO at Easter Seals Capper Foundation and have been here for 18 years. Founded by Arthur Capper, Kansas Governor & U.S. Senator, Publisher and Philanthropist, Easter Seals Capper Foundation is Celebrating 90 Years of Building the Abilities of individuals with disabilities and their families. We have served thousands of individuals with disabilities over the years. We provide services to infants, children and young adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Some of these disabilities include autism, cerebral palsy, sensory processing disorder and other orthopedic and neurological conditions. Our budget is primarily supported by charitable contributions. We also receive funding from fees for services and grants.

We are affiliated with Easter Seals, the leading non-profit provider of services for people living with autism, developmental disabilities, physical and intellectual disabilities and other special needs. Easter Seals is the largest health charity in the United States, providing services to 1.6 million people annually.

Kansas Medicaid Policy Reform Needed:

1. Kansas Medicaid Policy regarding Therapy Services

The current Kansas Medicaid Policy is discriminatory to children with disabilities due to congenital defects. This policy has a detrimental impact on children with developmental disabilities who are unable to access appropriate services based solely on the fact that their injuries occurred at the time of birth. It does not allow families to take advantage of more intensive, medically based rehabilitation, which is supported by current clinical research.

Current Kansas Medicaid Policy regarding Therapy Services reads:

"All therapy must be prescribed by a physician. Habilitative therapy is covered only for participants age 0 to under the age of 21. Therapy must be medically necessary. Therapy is covered for any birth defects/developmental delays only when approved and provided by an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Head Start or Local Education Agency (LEA) program. Therapy treatments performed in the Local

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Education Agency (LEA) settings may be habilitative or rehabilitative for disabilities due to birth defects of physical trauma/illness. The purpose of this therapy is to maintain maximum possible functioning for children.”

By limiting access to therapy services for children with birth defects to only those provided by an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) service provider or Local Education agency (LEA), the Kansas Medicaid Policy denies a child the right to Medicaid services defined by federal law and needed to correct or ameliorate a health concern. Children with disabilities, whether those impairments are from a birth injury/defect or from an illness or accident occurring after birth, should have the same options in selecting an approved provider for medical rehabilitation therapy services. This policy is discriminatory and action should be taken to change it immediately.

Solutions Needed: Kansas Medicaid Policy regarding Therapy Services should be revised to reflect current medical practices. Outdated discriminatory qualifiers should be removed. Suggested revisions:

All therapy must be prescribed by a physician. Services must be medically necessary. Rehabilitation services are covered only if they are expected to result in functional improvement. Outpatient rehabilitation for children, whether their disability results from a birth defect or postnatal injury, cannot duplicate what is provided in the Local Education Agency (LEA), Headstart and the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program.

2. Kansas Medicaid Autism Waiver & Critically Important Early Identification & Intervention Services

Kansas has a Medicaid Autism Waiver for children with autism up to age 5. In December 2007, the Report of the Kansas Autism Task Force to the Legislative Planning Committee said, “Current available funding for the Autism Waiver limits its services to 25 children.” That is 25 children in the entire state of Kansas! This was an unbelievably minimal number of children covered, which is disgraceful and dismal at best for our state.

Now, let’s fast forward to 2011, 4 years later. Currently, the Kansas Autism Waiver covers 45 children and 270 children are on a waiting list. Again, this is 45 children in the entire state of Kansas! This continues to be disgraceful and dismal coverage of young children with autism in Kansas since as many as 1 in every 110 children is diagnosed with some form of autism – for boys it’s 1 in every 70 – that’s a new diagnosis every 20 minutes.

We recommend that Kansas Leaders get serious and take action to Make the First Five Count! When kids get the right treatment and therapy they need before the age of 5, they are ready to learn alongside their peers, succeed and achieve their goals and dreams. Early diagnosis and early intervention are critical. Getting the right support at the earliest stage of life can help a child gain the skills he or she needs to be successful.

University of Chicago Distinguished Professor James J. Heckman, a Nobel laureate and expert in the economics of human development makes the case that investing in the first five years of children's lives is a sound and critical investment in our nation's future on the world stage. Professor Heckman reports that "early interventions" have much higher economic returns than later interventions for disadvantaged children. As an economist, James Heckman is an advocate for early education and care and strongly recommends that we "Make greater investments in young children to see greater returns in education, health and productivity."

We agree completely and hopefully a word to the wise on the Kansas Medicaid Reform Task Force is sufficient to get serious about the critical importance of early identification and intervention services. **It is critically important appropriate action be taken to increase the number of children on the Kansas Autism Waiver to a reasonable number for a state our size.**

Solutions Needed:

- The Kansas Medicaid Autism Waiver needs to be expanded to more young children.
- Autism waiver services need to go beyond age 5.
- Autism waiver services should be expanded to include Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech and Language Therapy. (Current services include behavioral therapy & respite care.)
- An early aggressive approach is needed which will optimize development and be financially feasible with family involvement. Early intervention is most cost effective as well as proactive in eliminating more severe issues in the future by teaching skills to both the child and the family.



MAKE THE
**FIRST FIVE
COUNT**™

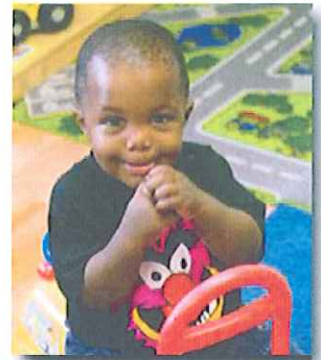


Facts and Figures

If we invest **\$1** in early diagnosis and treatment now, we will save **\$7** in future care costs to society.

With funding for early intervention services, the **numbers** look a little better. More than **11 percent** of children who are identified before age three and enrolled in early intervention services do not need special education.

Simply put, "early prevention is better and less expensive than later remediation."



Children who are in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs are **less** likely to be held back a grade, less likely to need special education and **more** likely to **graduate** high school. They are less involved in crime and delinquency, earn more as adults and are less likely to become dependent on welfare.

Basically, early care and education for vulnerable young children keeps kids in school and helps them find jobs; it keeps kids in communities and out of jail.

"Make **greater** investments in young children to see **greater** returns in education, health and productivity."

If you believe that **all** children should have access to early identification, education and care services that can make a difference in their future and the future of our state, join us.

Visit our media room for a list of references and additional resources.



**Capper
Foundation**

Become a part of the solution at

MakeTheFirstFiveCount.org

Note: this website will be available after April 1, 2011

Easter Seals Capper Foundation

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